

A BUNDLE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON'S
LETTERS, NOW FIRST PUBLISHED
THOMAS JEFFERSON



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BRONZE REPLICA OF MICHAEL ANGELO'S "DAVID."

GIFT OF ANDREW LANGDON TO THE BUFFALO HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE CITY OF BUFFALO.

SEE PAGE 480.

PUBLICATIONS
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BUFFALO
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME VII

EDITED BY
FRANK H. SEVERANCE
SECRETARY OF THE SOCIETY

BUFFALO, NEW YORK:
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1904

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FROM ITS ORGANIZATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

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*EMMOR HAINES,	1887
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*WILLIAM K. ALLEN,	1889
*GEORGE S. HAZARD,	1890 and 1892
*JOSEPH C. GREENE, M. D.,	1891
*JULIUS H. DAWES,	1893
ANDREW LANGDON,	1894 to 1904

* Deceased.

P R E F A C E

THE documents and narratives contained in the following pages are so fully explained and annotated as they appear that little if anything further by way of comment is here called for.

Unlike most of the material thus far contained in the Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society, the letters of Thomas Jefferson are not of merely local but of the widest interest. They afford glimpses of the mind of their writer, especially in his later years, and enable one to see somewhat clearer than heretofore, in what light he viewed the fundamental propositions of Christianity.

The journals of Gen. Henry A. S. Dearborn, here first printed, are a distinct contribution to the history of the negotiations which resulted in the relinquishment by the Senecas of the old Buffalo Creek Reservation. In the four reservations of Alleghany, Buffalo, Cattaraugus and Tonawanda, there were about 119,000 acres. It was inevitable that the increase of the white population around these tracts, especially at Buffalo, should exert a constantly-increasing pressure upon the Indians to part with their lands. The right to purchase from the Indian had been acquired from Massachusetts by the so-called Ogden Company. The policy of the United States Government, from the days of President Jackson, had been favorable to the removal of the Indians

to Western lands, for the most part beyond the Mississippi. President Van Buren, in a message to Congress, in December, 1837, urged such removal; and in a special message, Jan. 14, 1840, he stated that 40,000 Indians had been transferred to lands west of the Mississippi, since 1837.

The council held on the Buffalo Reservation in the summer of 1838, was an effort to secure the consent of a majority of the Seneca chiefs to a treaty which had been adopted by the Senate, providing for the emigration of the New York Indians. The proceedings of that council may be gathered from Gen. Dearborn's journal. Accusations were made, particularly by the Society of Friends, that many of the chiefs were bribed to gain their consent. A well-informed writer, the Hon. Lewis H. Morgan, has denounced the transactions of this period in strong terms:

"The darkest frauds, the basest bribery, and the most execrable intrigues which soulless avarice could suggest have been practiced in open day, upon this defenceless and much-injured people. . . . The Georgia treaty with the Cherokees, so justly held up to execration, is a white page compared with the treaties of 1838 and 1842, which were forced upon the Senecas. This project has already, however, in part, been defeated by the load of iniquity which hung upon the skirts of these treaties." ("League of the Iroquois," ed. of 1851, p. 33.)

Again he says (p. 458): "The [U. S.] Government bartered away its integrity to minister to the rapacious demands of the Ogden Land Company." These and similar accusations implicate the good name of the Federal Government, of Massachusetts and New York, and their representatives. One principal ground of complaint was, that the consents of the Indians were secured in many cases, not in open council, but singly, in hotel rooms, or elsewhere, where liquor and money could effectively be used to secure the signature of

the vacillating chieftain. The suggestion that signatures be thus obtained, may have come from Gen. Dearborn himself, though there is not the slightest ground for suspicion that he used or countenanced any fraudulent methods. Convinced of the advisability of the treaty, he believed that the opposition to it originated with interested whites, who wished the Indians to keep their reservation lands, in order to profit from mill and lumber privileges for which they paid the Indians very small sums.

In sending the treaty to the Senate, Jan. 14, 1840, President Van Buren declared that in his opinion the signatures had been obtained by fraud, and that the treaty ought not to be ratified. After being debated, through a period of eleven days, the vote stood nineteen to nineteen, and the treaty was ratified by the casting vote of R. M. Johnson, the Vice-President, in the affirmative. A memorial, signed by sixty-seven Seneca chiefs, begged that no appropriation be made to carry out the treaty, as they did not wish to leave their homes in New York. In the next year—1841—several petitions were sent to Congress, asking that the Indians be forcibly removed; but before action was taken, the committee was discharged from further consideration of the petitions. Governor Everett of Massachusetts, in his message of 1839, expressed the view that if the State had known all that it had since learned, it would not have consented to the request of the Ogden Company. Governor William H. Seward of New York wrote: "I am fully satisfied that the consent of the Senecas was obtained by fraud, corruption and violence, and it is therefore false, and ought to be held void." ("A Further Illustration of the Case of the Seneca Indians," p. 80.)

The outcome of it all was, that a very few of the Senecas and Tuscaroras removed to the West; and a compromise was effected with the Ogden Company, by which the Senecas

retained 52,000 acres of the 119,000 in controversy, being the Cattaraugus and Alleghany reservations. This arrangement was effected by the Buffalo treaty of 1842. Another result was the adoption by the Senecas of a constitution, and the establishment of a new form of self-government.

The sale of the valuable lands of the old Buffalo Creek Reservation naturally followed the treaty of 1842; but that these old negotiations sustain a live relation to present-day transactions, is perhaps all too familiar to those who now buy or sell some portions of these lands. The question of the validity of title has been repeatedly passed upon, but not always, it would appear, with full knowledge of the facts. A valuable report made to the State Legislature, Jan. 22, 1857, from the judiciary committee of the Senate, represents the rights of the Senecas to their lands as absolute, through a series of conveyances down to that date from the State of Massachusetts, from Oliver Phelps and from Robert Morris; and that no parties had then any preëmptive title to their lands. In recent years, inquiries have been made as to whether the city of Buffalo had any rights in or title to the parcels of land known as the Indian Church Square and Indian Church Cemetery. In 1882 Mayor Grover Cleveland vetoed a resolution for setting out trees on the first-named tract on the ground that it did not belong to the city. "On the contrary," he added, "the land appears to be the property of the Seneca nation of Indians." In 1896, Mr. Charles L. Feldman, Corporation Counsel, acting under a resolution of the Common Council, made an investigation and report on the whole matter of the city's right or title in the lands in question. His long report left some matters unsettled, but did show that the city had no title to the Indian Church Cemetery and the so-called "Square." The latter tract is now well-nigh obliterated; crossed by a street, and partly built over.

The cemetery tract is smaller than formerly, through the setting-in of the fence, and seems likely before long to share the common fate of land in that fast-growing part of Buffalo. It is still a beautiful place, with many historic associations. Here may still be traced the outlines of a prehistoric earth-work. Before the white man came, it was the Indians' village site or burial-place. At a later day Red Jacket and his associates, and Mary Jemison, "the white woman of the Genesee," were buried here, under fine old oaks and walnuts, still standing. There is a strong desire, on the part of members of the Historical Society and others, that this place of many associations be spared, and kept in a state of nature. Its addition to the park system has been repeatedly advocated, but as yet without result.

In a subsequent volume of these *Publications*, perhaps in connection with further material from the unpublished papers of Gen. Dearborn, it is proposed to print the history of the Indian Church Square and Cemetery, with a full report on the validity of title, and other related matters, by a competent hand. The Historical Society may not be able to preserve this tract for the enjoyment of present residents of Buffalo and of posterity; but it can at least make available a record of the facts in the case.

The Society was most fortunate to secure for publication in this volume Mr. Charles Mulford Robinson's admirable and definitive biography of his ancestor, the Honorable Augustus Porter, one of the large and influential figures in the early history of Western New York. With this is published, for the first time in full, Judge Porter's own narrative of his early years; and a number of other journals by early surveyors of our region. The one surveyor of all most important in the early history of Buffalo was Joseph Ellicott. He too left a journal, and an exceedingly voluminous corres-

pondence. It was the original intention of the editor of this volume, to include the Ellicott papers with the others relating to the pioneer surveyors; but when the work of preparing them for the press was undertaken there was found to be so much of them of historic interest, that they could not be included in the present volume without making it too large. They will form an important part of a future volume.

The Bunn and Ramsay narratives, and other bibliographical matter, are printed in pursuance of the plan entered upon in volume V of these *Publications*, to publish lists of books in the several fields of the literature of our region, and reprints of a few of the important rare things which, because of their great scarcity, are practically unknown and inaccessible to most readers.

Acknowledgment, for help given in the preparation of this volume, is gratefully made to Mr. Charles Mulford Robinson of Rochester; Mr. Alexander J. Porter of Niagara Falls; the Hon. Peter A. Porter of Buffalo; and Miss Frances L. Spencer, Erie, Pa. In the preparation of the index, as was the case with that of Volume VI, the editor has had the expert assistance of Miss Ellen M. Chandler of the Buffalo Public Library. It corrects and fills out many names which in the text are incomplete or incorrect; not so through inadvertence, but because it is desirable, in a publication of this character, to print old journals and other documents as their authors wrote them; reserving for notes and index guidance which may be necessary for the reader.

F. H. S.

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A BUNDLE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON'S LETTERS

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED

EDITED BY FRANK H. SEVERANCE

Secretary of the Buffalo Historical Society

Among the unpublished manuscripts in the possession of the Buffalo Historical Society, are a number of letters by Thomas Jefferson. The student of American history and letters, especially of the period in which Jefferson lived and wrote, may find his credulity somewhat taxed by this announcement. When one reflects that next to Washington himself, perhaps no figure in our national history—certainly no figure in our Revolutionary history—has been the subject of more thorough and continued study than has that of Jefferson, the claim that at this day any of his letters exist, unpublished, is little short of presumptuous. A brief recital of the facts will enable the reader to judge for himself.

Something more than thirty years ago Mrs. Pauline E. Henry of Philadelphia gave to the Buffalo Historical Society a collection of the writings and correspondence of her grandfather, Francis Adrian van der Kemp. Him I will presently introduce, *in propria persona*; for the moment it may suffice that he was an early settler of Central New York, a man of culture, who enjoyed the friendship of many of the most eminent Americans of his day. Among his papers was the journal of a tour he had made from the Hudson to Lake

Ontario in 1792. Some years after the gift of these papers to the Buffalo Historical Society the Rev. Albert Bigelow, then acting as its Secretary, edited two volumes of its Publications, which were issued respectively in 1879 and 1880. He recognized the value of the narrative of the journey to Lake Ontario and published it in the second volume. As for the rest of the collection, it continued to repose for twenty-four years more in the lockers of the Society, its existence probably unknown to most of the members. A recent examination discovered, besides the voluminous manuscripts of Judge van der Kemp, original letters written to him by John Adams, John Quincy Adams, James Wadsworth, George Clinton, Cornelius Beekman, Philip Schuyler, John Jay, Tobias Lear—the private secretary of Washington—Aaron Burr, Robert B. Livingston, Josiah Quincy, DeWitt Clinton—an interesting and long-continued correspondence—and a collection of fourteen letters from Thomas Jefferson, eleven of them in Jefferson's own handwriting; and with them, also in Jefferson's penmanship, a copy of his famous Syllabus, originally communicated to Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia.

I have examined every available publication with a view to learning whether these letters have been printed. In "The Writings of Thomas Jefferson," edited by his son-in-law, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, only one of them appears. In the latest and fullest collection of Jefferson's writings, recently edited by Paul Leicester Ford, and published in ten volumes, I find but three, all credited to the Johnson MSS., for which collection they were apparently copied many years ago. As printed by Mr. Ford, these three contain numerous errors, are much abbreviated, and of one of them the year of its composition is wrongly given. A portion of one other letter, copied from the Buffalo Historical Society MSS., is used in a lately published biography of Jefferson's correspondent.* The calendar of Jefferson manuscripts in the Department of State at Washington enu-

* "Francis Adrian van der Kemp, 1752-1829. An autobiography, together with extracts from his correspondence." Edited by Helen Lincklaen Fairchild. New York, 1903.

merates them all; but so far as I have been able to learn, eight of these letters have never been made public. The fourteen preserved by the Buffalo Historical Society are, with two exceptions, wholly in Jefferson's handwriting; with one exception are all addressed to the same correspondent, and range in date from 1788 to Nov. 30, 1825, but a few months before the aged statesman laid down his pen.

Before going further, let us make the acquaintance of this correspondent, with whom, through so long a period of years, Thomas Jefferson found it a pleasure to exchange views. He is well worth knowing. Indeed, it is not merely to the perusal of a few detached letters that the reader's attention is invited, but to an hour in the company of some rare spirits—an hour with Jefferson and his friends, all gentlemen of talent and scholarly attainments, who delighted to discuss together the latest new thing in scientific or philosophical research, or the ethics of life on the broadest Christian basis. I cannot better introduce this correspondent than by quoting the following letter, originally written to the editor of the *New York Statesman*:

WESTERN REGION, September, 1820.

MY DEAR SIR: In one of my solitary walks with my gun on my shoulder and my dog by my side, I strayed eight or ten miles from my lodgings; and as I was musing on the beauties of the country, and meditating on the various and picturesque scenes which were constantly unfolding, I was roused from my revery by voices which proceeded from persons at a short distance. In casting my eyes in that direction, I saw two venerable men with fishing rods in their hands angling for trout, in a copious and pellucid stream which rolled at their feet. I was hailed by them, and requested to approach, which I immediately did, and in exchanging salutations, I found that they were men of the world, perfectly acquainted with the courtesies of life. One of them held up a string of fine trout, and asked me in the most obliging manner to go home with them and partake of the fruits of their amusement. Struck with the appearance of the strangers, and anxious to avail myself of the pleasure of their company, I did not hesitate to accept of this hospitable

offer, on condition that they would permit me to add the woodcock, snipe, and wood ducks, which were suspended from my gun, to their acquisitions. This offer was kindly accepted. A general and desultory conversation ensued, and we arrived in a short time at a small village, and on ascending the steps of an elegant house I was congratulated by my new friends on my entry into Oldenbarneveld. In the course of an hour dinner was served up, I sat down and enjoyed a treat worthy to be compared to the Symposium of Plato. I soon found that these venerable friends were emigrants from Holland—that they were men of highly cultivated minds, and polished manners—and that they had selected their habitations in this place, where they enjoyed

“An elegant sufficiency, content,
Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
Ease and alternate labor, useful life,
Progressive virtue and approving Heaven.”

The elder of these gentlemen had received the best education that Holland could afford. He was brought up a clergyman, and at the commencement of the American Revolution, he became its enthusiastic and energetic advocate, and wrote an able work in vindication of its character and conduct. In the struggles which subsequently took place in his native country, he sided with the patriots. His friend held a high military office during that commotion, and unites the frankness of a soldier and the refinement of a gentleman with the erudition of a scholar.

During their residence in this country, they have been attentive to its interests. As far back as 1795, the elder gentleman proposed an Agricultural Society for this district, and addressed it in a luminous speech.

I was penetrated with the most profound respect, when I witnessed the various and extensive acquirements of this man. He is a perfect master of all the Greek and Roman authors—skilled in Hebrew, the Syriac, and the other oriental languages—with the German and French he is perfectly acquainted—His mind is a great store-house of knowledge; and I could perceive no deficiency, except in his not being perfectly acquainted with the modern discoveries in natural

science, which arises in a great degree from his sequestered life. He manages an extensive correspondence with many learned men in Europe, as well as America. And although I had never heard of him before, yet I am happy to understand that his merits are justly appreciated by some of the first men in this country.

He has lately been complimented with a degree of Doctor of Laws, by a celebrated university of New England. He is now employed by the State of New York in translating its Dutch Records—and through the munificence of David Parish, the great banker, he will be enabled to have transcripts of the records of the Dutch West India Company to fill up an important chasm in the history of this great state.

Thus, my friend, I have made a great discovery. In a secluded, unassuming village, I have discovered *the most learned man in America*, cultivating, like our first parent, his beautiful and spacious garden with his own hands—cultivating literature and science—cultivating the virtues which adorn the fireside and the altar—cultivating the esteem of the wise and the good—and blessing with the radiations of his illumined and highly gifted mind, all who enjoy his conversation, and who are honored by his correspondence.

This letter, published over the pseudonym of "Hibernicus," was written by DeWitt Clinton. In 1820, at 51 years of age, he was serving his first term as Governor. He had been in public life almost from early youth; had served in both branches of the Legislature, and in the United States Senate—the youngest man who had ever taken a seat in that body; had been mayor of New York, and lieutenant-governor of the State; an unsuccessful candidate for President of the United States, in 1812, against Madison; and from 1809 the zealous champion of the great canal. In the multiplicity and usefulness of his public services, in his natural ardor of temperament, and far-sighted devotion to the public good, one may find in DeWitt Clinton many resemblances to Theodore Roosevelt. In 1820 the completion of the canal was the passion of his life. In this tour, which he described under the pen-name of "Hibernicus," he had crossed the State, visiting Buffalo and Niagara Falls, and noting everywhere,

both as a naturalist and a man of affairs, the phenomena and resources of the State. It was on his return from this Western journey, that at the little village of Olden Barneveld, not far from the then famous Trenton Falls, he encountered, perhaps in the delightful way he has described, this "most learned man in America." One says "perhaps"; for it is certain that the acquaintance here described antedated this visit. Among the Clinton letters in the Buffalo Historical Society collection above mentioned are several of earlier date than this visit; "Hibernicus" was evidently taking an author's liberty for literary effect. Two years later, in 1822, the letters of "Hibernicus" were published in book form.* Mr. Clinton sent a copy with his compliments to Thomas Jefferson, which the latter acknowledged in a pleasant letter. The "Letters of Hibernicus" have never been reprinted.

This "most learned man in America," whom Clinton thus discovered in 1820, had been in correspondence with Jefferson since 1788. He was Francis Adrian van der Kemp, a Dutch clergyman, publicist and reformer, who was a refugee from his own country. Born in 1752, in 1766 he was a cadet in his father's regiment. After four years of study at Groningen, where he impaired his health by excessive and eccentric application, and after passing through a period of religious *sturm und stress*, he was admitted to preach in the Dutch Baptist church, his first parish being at Huyzen in Holland. I draw these and other facts following from his manuscript autobiography in the possession of the Buffalo Historical Society. He became the bosom friend of the Baron van der Capellen, a Dutch patriot of distinguished services. I cannot stay to enter upon this nobleman's career, but as the earliest letter of Thomas Jefferson in the collection which follows is addressed to him, some further delineation of his figure is desirable.

Van der Capellen was prominent in Holland, during the years of our Revolution, as a sympathizer with the cause of the American patriots. When, in December, 1775—six months before Jefferson and his associates had wrought out

* "Letters on the Natural History and Internal Resources of the State of New York." By Hibernicus. New York: sold by E. Bliss & E. White, No. 128 Broadway. 1822. 12mo. pp. 224.

the Declaration of Independence—there arose in the *Ridderschap*, the legislative body, of *Overyssel*, the great question of foreign policy, and of attitude towards England in her contest with the American colonies, *van der Capellen* delivered a famous speech opposing the Government measure of the “lending of the Scotch Brigade to the King of England for service in America, as a mark of friendship.”* It was *van der Capellen* who led the opposition to the demand, made in an autograph letter from King George to William V., for troops to be sent against the American colonies. He declared in an impassioned speech that whatever might be the ultimate fate of the American colonies he would always regard it as a glory and an honor openly to have espoused their cause, which he regarded as that of all human kind. When the Brigade was at last lent to the King, it was upon condition that it should not be used out of Europe.

The Baron *van der Capellen* still further won the displeasure of the Court by printing and circulating his pro-American speech, and for other forms of opposition. *Van der Kemp*, meanwhile, ardently sympathizing with the cause of the American colonies, had championed the rights of the people of the Netherlands in many a seditious speech, sermon and pamphlet. He resigned his pastorate and took up the sword. He underwent a long trial for his writings and was acquitted; but his activity in the Patriot cause against the house of Orange resulted in the confiscation of his property. The climax came in his attempted defense of the city of *Wyk*, at the head of a small band of burghers. The city being invested by some 1500 Prussian troops, they had to open the gates and surrender. *Van der Kemp* was for a time detained in prison, but with his associates was promised his freedom

* In the annals of hired mercenaries, this Scotch Brigade in the service of the Dutch is not without distinction. John Evelyn has recorded in his famous Diary, that on July 18, 1685, he “went to see the muster of the six Scotch and English regiments whom the Prince of Orange had lately sent to his Majesty out of Holland upon this rebellion, but which were now returning, there having been no occasion for their use.” Those who know their *Waverley* will recall, in the story of “*My Aunt Margaret’s Mirror*” (“*Chronicles of the Canongate*”) the duel between Sir Philip Forester and Captain Falconer “of the Scotch Dutch, as they are called.” This brigade of Scotch auxiliaries was in quarters at Rotterdam, at the period of the story.

if they would indemnify the State for losses incurred, as it was officially termed, during their usurpation. Practically ruined, and thoroughly discouraged, van der Kemp resolved to find an asylum in the American colonies, the course of whose successful revolution he had watched with so much satisfaction.

It was the 9th of December, 1787, when he was released from prison. Twelve days later, arrived at Antwerp, he wrote to John Adams, the Minister of the United States at the Court of St. James. Mr. Adams replied as follows:

LONDON, Jan. 6, 1788.

SIR: As I had suffered much anxiety on your account during your Imprisonment, your Letter of the 29. of last month gave me some relief. I rejoiced to find that you was at liberty and out of danger.

inclosed are two Letters, which I hope may be of Service to you.—living is now cheaper, than it has been, in America, and I doubt not you will succeed very well.—You will be upon your guard, among the Dutch People of New York, respecting religious Principles, untill you have prudently informed yourself of the State of Parties there.—if you should not find every Thing to your Wish in New York, I think in Pensilvania, you cannot fail. But New York is the best Place to go to, at first. I wish you a pleasant Voyage, and am sir your most

obedient servant

JOHN ADAMS.

THE REV'D MR. VANDERKEMP.

This friendly letter was the beginning of a correspondence that lasted until the death of Adams.

Through the Baron van der Capellen the good offices of Jefferson, then our Minister to France, were solicited. Jefferson, temporarily away from his post, replied as follows:

ROTTERDAM Mar 8, 1788

It was not in my power to write the letter for Mr. Van der Kemp the evening before I left Paris: and it is not till I arrive here that I have found one moment of leisure. not

knowing in what state of our Union he may chuse to settle I am not able to know to what persons he may be usefully & directly addressed. I give him therefore a letter to Mr. Madison, my most particular friend, now a member of Congress at New York. Whenever M. van der Kemp shall have made up his mind as to his settlement in America, Mr. Madison will be able to give & to procure for him the best introductory letters possible. his influence will be zealously used & omnipotent in it's effect. I am happy, while serving a worthy man, to have the additional gratification of doing what is pleasing to you, & to assure you of those sentiments of respect & attachment with which I have the honor to be, Sir, your most obedient & most humble servant

TH: JEFFERSON.

BARON DE CAPELLEN

Mrs. van der Kemp, who with her children had left Holland with passports made out for her security in her maiden name of Vos, had looked after the removal of such of their furniture and books as it was possible to take to America. She joined her husband in Antwerp in March, 1788, in which month they sailed from Havre, reaching New York in May. Letters of introduction to eminent Americans secured for him a courteous and cordial reception in distinguished society, but did not go far towards establishing him in a way of living. After a visit at Mt. Vernon, and some weeks of travel and visiting, he bought a farm near Kingston in Ulster Co., New York. He was naturalized in 1789, and in 1792 made a journey to Lake Ontario, the narrative of which, from his original manuscript, was first published by the Buffalo Historical Society, as above mentioned.

During the first years of his American residence Mr. van der Kemp made some effort to recover his lost property in Holland. He appealed to President Washington; in reply he received the following letter from Thomas Jefferson:

NEW YORK, 31st March, 1790.

SIR: The letter has been duly received which you addressed to the President of the United States, praying his Interference with the Government of the United Nether-

lands, on the Subject of Property you left there on your coming to America. I have it in charge to inform you that the United States have at present no Minister at the Hague, and consequently no channel through which they could express their concern for your Interests. However willing too we are to receive and protect all persons who come hither with the Property they bring, perhaps it may be doubted how far it would be expedient to engage ourselves for that they leave behind, or for any other Matter retrospective to their becoming Citizens. In the present Instance we hope that no Confiscation of the Residuum of your Property left in the United Netherlands having taken place, the Justice of that Government will leave you no occasion for that Interference which you have been pleased to ask from this.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your most obedient

& most h^ble servt

TH: JEFFERSON

MR. VANDERKEMP.

The years that followed were full of struggle with the unaccustomed conditions of a new country, to which Mr. van der Kemp brought complete devotion, but little of the resourcefulness and conquering spirit of the typical pioneer. In 1794 he settled on the banks of Oneida Lake; was made an assistant justice of the peace—whence his subsequent title of “Judge”—and organized an Agricultural Society for the Western District of New York. In 1797 he removed to Olden Barneveld—later Trenton, in Oneida County, but recently renamed Barneveld. Here he built him a modest house, still standing; made a precarious existence for his family by gardening, but finding his chief pleasure in his books, in the constant application of his pen, and in a voluminous correspondence with John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and other statesmen and philosophers of his day. Here too he enjoyed the association of Col. Adam Gerard Mappa, a Dutch patriot who had been exiled from Delft, and who, coming to America, became agent for the Holland Land Company. At Olden Barneveld Col. Mappa built a fine

stone mansion in which he passed his last years. The house is still standing, an excellent example of domestic architecture of the Georgian period.* It was undoubtedly Col. Mappa who was Judge van der Kemp's companion on the fishing tour when De Witt Clinton met them, as described in his letter, above printed.

It was during the years that followed, from 1816 to 1825, that there passed between this sequestered Dutch savant and the Sage of Monticello the correspondence which follows—a correspondence which, as stated above, appears to be for the most part unpublished. Their earlier letters, at least on Jefferson's part, had been chiefly of a formal and official character; but their minds had a natural kinship in their fondness for philosophical speculation. Van der Kemp, among his numerous literary undertakings, projected or accomplished, had proposed to write a history of Christianity, or a life of Christ. Jefferson, to whom was sometimes attributed a most unorthodox breadth of view, especially for his espousal of some of the principles of Thomas Paine, had expressed great interest in this work, and had sent to Judge van der Kemp a copy of his Syllabus. The Syllabus itself is to be found in the published collections of Jefferson's writings. In the collection under notice is contained Jefferson's own manuscript copy, and also a copy, in his writing, of the following letter, which Jefferson originally sent with the Syllabus to Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia:

Apr. 21, 1803

DEAR SIR: In some of the delightful conversations with you in the evenings of 1798-99, the Christian religion was sometimes our topic; and I then promised you that one day or other I would give you my views of it. they are the result of a life of enquiry and reflection, and very different from that Anti-Christian system imputed to me by those who know nothing of my opinions. to the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed, but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian, in the only sense in which he wished anyone to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines, in preference to all others, ascribing to himself

* Now owned by Mr. William S. Wicks of Buffalo.

every human excellence, & believing he never claimed any other. at the intervals since these conversations, when I could justifiably abstract myself from other affairs, this subject has been under my contemplation: but the more I considered it, the more it expanded beyond the measure of either my time or information. in the moment of setting out on a late journey, I received from Dr. Priestly* his little treatise of "Socrates & Jesus compared." this being a section of the general view I had taken of the field, it became a subject of reflection, while on the road, and unoccupied otherwise. the result was, to arrange in my mind a Syllabus, or Outline of such an Estimate of the comparative merits of Christianity as I wished to see executed by someone of more leisure and information for the task, than myself. this I now send you, as the only discharge of my promise I can probably ever execute. and in confiding it to you, I know it will not be exposed to the malignant perversions of those who make, of every word on the subject of religion, a text for misrepresentations and calumnies. I am moreover averse to the communication of my religious tenets to the public; because it would countenance the presumption of those who have endeavored to draw them before that tribunal, & to seduce public opinion to erect itself into that inquisition over the rights of conscience, which the laws have so justly proscribed. it behoves every man who values liberty of conscience for himself, to resist invasions of it in the case of others. it behoves him, too, in his own case, to give no example of concession, betraying the common right of independent opinion, by answering questions of faith, which the laws have left between god and himself.

This letter, like those that follow, exhibits some of Mr. Jefferson's peculiarities as a letter writer. He often—it would seem, usually—began his sentences with a small letter. He sometimes used forms of spelling not now accepted; his penmanship, often minute and delicately precise, was always

* Joseph Priestley, scientist and independent churchman. The treatise alluded to by Jefferson is perhaps an early draft of what appeared in 1804, the year of Priestley's death, with the title, "The Doctrines of Heathen Philosophy compared with those of Revelation."

as legible as was the thought clear and definite; while his concluding phrases were an example in high degree of an epistolary courtesy then in vogue, but now, alas, largely gone out of use.

The Syllabus, which occasioned much of the correspondence between Jefferson and Judge van der Kemp, and is perhaps essential to an understanding of the letters, is here printed from Mr. Jefferson's own manuscript, the peculiarities of the original, in spelling and arrangement, being preserved as far as possible:

SYLLABUS of an Estimate of the doctrines of Jesus compared with those of others. In a comparative view of the ethics of the enlightened nations of antiquity, of the Jews, & of Jesus, no notice should be taken of the corruptions of reason among the antients, to wit, the idolatry & superstition of their vulgar, nor of the corruptions of Christianity by the over-learned among its professors. Let a just view be taken of the moral principles inculcated by the most esteemed of the sects of antient philosophy or of their individuals; particularly Pythagoras, Socrates, Epicurus, Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, Antoninus.

I. Philosophers. 1. Their precepts related chiefly to ourselves, & the government of those passions which, unrestrained, would disturb our tranquility of mind.* in this branch of philosophy they were really great.

2. In developing our duty to others they were short and defective. They embraced indeed the circles of kindred and friends, & inculcated patriotism or the love of our country in the aggregate, as a primary obligation: towards our neighbors & countrymen they taught justice, but scarcely viewed them as within the circle of

* To explain, I will exhibit the heads of Seneca's & Cicero's philosophical works, the most extensive of any we have received from the antients. of 10 heads in Seneca, 7 relate to ourselves, towit, deira, Consolatio, de tranquillitate, de constantia sapientis, de otio sapientis, de vita beatâ, de brevitate vite. 2 relate to others, de clementia, de beneficiis, and 1 relates to the government of the world, de providentia. of 11 tracts of Cicero, 5 respect ourselves, viz. de finibus, Tusculanes, Academica, Paradoxa, de Senectute. 1 de officiis partly to ourselves, partly to others. 1 de amicitia relates to others. and 4 are on different subjects, to wit, de natura, de orum, de divinatione, de fato, and Somnium Scipionis. [Note by Jefferson.]

benevolence: still less have they inculcated peace, charity & love to all our fellow men, or embraced with benevolence the whole family of mankind.

- II. Jews. 1. their system was deism, that is, the belief in one only god. but their ideas of him & of his attributes *were degrading & injurious.*

2. their ethics were not only imperfect, but often irreconcilable with the sound dictates of reason & morality, as they respect intercourse with those around us. and repulsive & anti-social, as respecting other nations. they needed reformation therefore in an eminent degree.

- III. Jesus. In this state of things among the Jews, Jesus appeared. his parentage was obscure; his condition poor; his education null; his natural endowments great; his life correct & innocent; he was meek, benevolent, patient, firm, disinterested and of the sublimest eloquence.

The disadvantages under which his doctrines appear are remarkable.

1. like Socrates & Epictetus, he wrote nothing himself;

2. but he had not, like them, a Xenophon or Arrian to write for him. on the contrary, all the learned of his country, entrenched in it's power & riches, were opposed to him, lest his labors should undermine their advantages;

and the committing to writing his life and doctrines, fell on the most unlettered & ignorant of men; who wrote too from memory, and not till long after the transactions had passed.

3. according to the ordinary fate of those who attempt to enlighten & reform mankind, he fell an early victim to that jealousy & combination of the altar & the throne at about 33 years of age; his reason having not yet *attained the maximum of it's energy;*

nor the course of his preaching, which was but of about 3 years, presented occasions of developing a *complete system of moral duties.*

4. hence the doctrines which he really delivered were *defective* as a whole.

and fragments only of what he did deliver have come to us, mutilated, mistated, & often unintelligible.

5. they have been still more disfigured by the corruptions of schismatising followers, who have found an interest in sophisticating & perverting the simple doctrines he taught by engrafting on them the mysticisms of a Graecian Sophist, frittering them into subtleties, & obscuring them with jargon, until they have caused good men to reject the whole in disgust, & to view Jesus himself as an impostor.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, a system of morals is presented to us which if filled up in the true style & spirit of the rich fragments he left us, would be the most perfect and sublime that has ever been taught by man.

The question of his being a member of the godhead, or in direct communication with it, claimed for him by some of his followers and denied by others is foreign to the present view, which is merely an estimate of the intrinsic merit of his doctrines.

1. He corrected the Deism of the Jews, confirming them in their belief of one only god, and giving them juster notions of his attributes and government.

2. His moral doctrines, relating to kindred & friends were more pure & perfect than those of the most correct of the philosophers, and greatly more so than those of the Jews.

and they went far beyond both in inculcating universal philanthropy.

not only to kindred & friends, to neighbors & countrymen, but

to all mankind, gathering all into one family, under the bonds of love, charity, peace, common wants, & common aids. a development of this head will evince the peculiar superiority of the system of Jesus over all others.

3. The precepts of philosophy, and of the Hebrew code, laid hold of actions only.

he pushed his scrutinies into the heart of man; erected his tribunal in the region of his thoughts; and purified the waters at the fountain head.

4. He *taught emphatically* the doctrine of a future state which was doubted or disbelieved by the Jews; and wielded it with efficacy, as an important incentive supplementary to the other motives to moral conduct.

This estimate of the doctrines of Jesus was formulated, it will be noticed, during Jefferson's first term as President—in the year, it so happens, when he accomplished the purchase of Louisiana from Napoleon. It was thirteen years later, when he had finished his public career and was living in retirement at Monticello, that he communicated it to Judge van der Kemp, apparently in compliance with a request, with the following letter:

POPLAR FOREST NEAR LYNCHBURG Apr. 25, '16.

SIR: Your favor of Mar. 24 was handed to me just as I was setting out on a journey of time and distance, which will explain the date of this both as to time and place. The Syllabus, which is the subject of your letter, was addressed to a friend to whom I had promised a more detailed view, but finding I should never have time for that, I sent him what I thought should be the outlines of such a work. the same subject entering sometimes into the correspondence between Mr. Adams and myself, I sent him a copy of it. The friend to whom it had been first addressed dying soon after, I asked from his family the return of the original as a confidential communication, which they kindly sent me. so that no copy of it but that in possession of Mr. Adams, now exists out of my own hands. I have used this caution, lest it should get out in connection with my name; as I was unwilling to draw on myself a swarm of insects, whose buz is more disquieting than their bite. as an abstract thing and without any intimation from what quarter derived I can have no objection to it's being committed to the consideration of the world. I believe it may even do good by pro-

ducing discussion and finally a true view of the merits of this great reformer. persuing the same idea after writing the Syllabus I made, for my own satisfaction, an Extract from the Evangelists of the texts of his morals, selecting those only whose style and spirit proved them genuine, and his own; and they are as distinguishable from the matter in which they are imbedded as diamonds in dunghills. a more precious morsel of ethics was never seen. it was too hastily done, however, being the work of one or two evenings only, while I lived at Washington, overwhelmed with other business; and it is my intention to go over it again at more leisure. this shall be the work of the ensuing winter. I gave it the title of "the Philosophy of Jesus extracted from the text of the Evangelists." to this Sylabus and Extract, if a history of his life can be added, written with the same view of the subject, the world will see, after the fogs shall be dispelled, in which for 14 centuries he has been enveloped by Jugglers to make money of him, when the genuine character shall be exhibited, which they have dressed up in the rags of an Imposter, the world, I say, will at length see the immortal merit of this first of human Sages. I rejoice that you think of undertaking this work. it is one I have long wished to see written on the scale of a Laertius or a Nepos, nor can it be a work of labor, or of volume, for his journeyings from Judea to Samaria, and Samaria to Galilee, do not cover much country; and the incidents of his life require little research. they are all at hand, and need only to be put into human dress; noticing such only as are within the physical laws of nature, and offending none by a denial, or even a mention, of what is not. If the Syllabus and Extract (which is short) either in substance, or at large, are worth a place under the same cover with your biography, they are at your service. I ask one only condition, that no possibility shall be admitted of my name being even intimated with the publication. if done in England, as you seem to contemplate, there will be less likelihood of my being thought of. I shall be much gratified to learn that you pursue your intention of writing the life of Jesus, and pray to accept the assurances of my great respect and esteem.

TH: JEFFERSON.

Mr. van der Kemp appears to have lost no time in sending a copy—happily, not the original which Jefferson had confided to him—to a London editor; for it was published, October, 1816, in the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*. He seems to have informed Mr. Jefferson of the disposition made of it, for a few weeks later he received the following letter:

MONTICELLO July 30. 16.

DEAR SIR: Your favor of July 14 is received, and I am entirely satisfied with the disposition you have made of the Syllabus, keeping my name unconnected with it, as I am sure you have done. I shall really be gratified to see a full and fair examination of the ground it takes. I believe it to be the only ground on which reason and truth can take their stand, and that only against which we are told the gates of hell shall not finally prevail. yet I have little expectation that the affirmative can be freely maintained in England. we know it could not here, for altho' we have freedom of religious opinion by law, we are yet under the inquisition of public opinion: and in England it would have both law and public opinion to encounter. the love of peace, and a want of either time or taste for these disquisitions induce silence on my part as to the contents of this paper, and all explanations & discussions which might arise out of it; and this must be my apology for observing the same silence on the questions of your letter. I leave the thing to the evidence of the books on which it claims to be founded, and with which I am persuaded you are more familiar than myself. Altho' I rarely waste time in reading on theological subjects, as mangled by our Pseudo-Christians, yet I can readily suppose Basanistos may be amusing. ridicule is the only weapon which can be used against unintelligible propositions. ideas must be distinct before reason can act upon them; and no man ever had a distinct idea of the trinity. it is the mere Abracadabra of the mountebanks calling themselves the priests of Jesus. if it could be understood it would not answer their purpose. their security is in their faculty of shedding darkness, like the scuttle-fish, thro' the element in which they move, and making it impenetrable to the eye of a

pursuing enemy, and there they will skulk, until some rational creed can occupy the void which the obliteration of their duperies would leave in the minds of our honest and unsuspecting brethren. whenever this shall take place, I believe that Christianity may be universal & eternal. I salute you with great esteem and respect.

TH: JEFFERSON.

MR. VANDERKEMP

It is evident that at this time Judge van der Kemp contemplated a great work on Christian philosophy, stimulated, no doubt, by Jefferson's interest and sympathetic suggestions. A few months later this message came to Olden Barneveld:

POPLAR FOREST NEAR LYNCHBURG NOV. 24. 16.

DEAR SIR: I receive your favor of Nov. 1 at this place at which I make occasionally a temporary residence; and I have perused with great satisfaction the magnificent skeleton you inclose me of what would indeed be a compleat Encyclopedia of Christian philosophy. it's execution would require a Newton in physics a Locke in metaphysics, and one who to a possession of all history, adds a judgment and candor to estimate it's evidence and credibility in proportion to the character of facts it presents, and he should have a long life before him. I fear we shall not see this canvas filled in our day, and that we must be contented to have all this light blaze upon us when the curtain shall be removed which limits our mortal sight. I had however persuaded myself to hope that we should have from your own pen, one branch of this great work, the mortal biography of Jesus. this candidly and rationally written, without any regard to sectarian dogmas, would reconcile to his character a weighty multitude who do not properly estimate it, and would lay the foundation of a genuine christianity.

You ask if I have ever published anything but the Notes on Virginia? nothing but official State papers, except a pamphlet at the commencement of our difference with England & on that subject and another at the close of the revolution proposing the introduction of our decimal money, of

neither of which do I possess a copy.—Should a curiosity to see our part of the union tempt your friend Dr. Willoughby to come as far as Monticello, I shall be very happy to receive him there and to shew my respect for his worth as well as for your recommendation of it. Accept the assurance of my great esteem and consideration.

TH: JEFFERSON.

MR. VANDERKEMP.

Some report evidently reached Mr. Jefferson which made him fearful lest his identity as author of the Syllabus should become known. It stirred him to write in a vein far less placid than was his wont:

MONTICELLO, Mar. 16. 17.

DEAR SIR: I learn with real concern that the editor of the Theological Repository possesses the name of the author of the Syllabus. altho' he coyly witholds it for the present he will need but a little coaxing to give it out and to let loose upon him the genus irritabile vatum, there and here. be it so. I shall receive with folded arms all their hacking & hewing. I shall not ask their passport to a country which they claim indeed as theirs, but which was made, I trust, for moral man, and not for dogmatising venal jugglers. Should they however, instead of abuse, appeal to the tribunal of reason and fact, I shall really be glad to see on what point they will begin their attack. for it expressly excludes all question of supernatural character or endowment. I am in hopes it may find advocates as well as opposers, and produce for us a temperate & full developement. as to myself, I shall be a silent auditor.

Mr. Adams's book on Feudal law, mentioned in your letter of Feb. 2. I possessed, and it is now in the library at Washington which I ceded to Congress. in the same letter you ask if I can explain the phrase "*il est digne de porter le ruban gris de lin.*" I do not know that I can. *gris de lin* is the French designation of the colour which the English call grizzle. the *ruban gris de lin* may be the badge of some association, unknown, I acknowledge, to me but to which the author from which you quote it may have some allusion. I shall be

happy to learn that you pursue your purpose as to the life of the great reformer, and more so in seeing it accomplished. I return the Repository with thanks for the opportunity of seeing it, and I pray you to accept my friendly and respectful salutations.

TH: JEFFERSON.

Mr. Jefferson appears to have been reassured without delay, for in May of that year he wrote to Judge van der Kemp as follows:

MONTICELLO, May 1. 17.

DEAR SIR: I thank you for your letter of Mar. 30. my mind is entirely relieved by your assurance that my name did not cross the Atlantic in connection with the Syllabus. the suggestion then of the Editor of the Theological Repository was like those of our newspaper editors who pretend they know everything, but in discretion will not tell us, while we see that they give us all they know and a great deal more. I am now at the age of quietism, and wish not to be kicked by the asses of hierophantism. I hope you will find time to take up this subject. there are some new publications in Germany which would greatly aid it. to wit,

Augusti's translation & Commentary on the 7. Catholic epistles, in which he has thrown great light on the opinions of the primitive Christians & on the innovations of St. Paul printed at Lemgo 1808. in 2. vols. 8vo.

Palmer's Paul and Gamaliel. Giessen 1806.

Munter's history of dogmas. Gottengen 1806. showing the formation of the dogmatical system of Christianity.

Augusti's Manual of the history of Christian dogmas. Leipsic 1805.

Marheinacke's Manual of Ecclesiastical history. Erlangen 1806. developing the simple ideas of the first Christians, and the causes & progress of the subsequent changes.

I have not written for these books, because I suppose they are in German which I do not read; but I expect they are profoundly learned on their subjects.

In answer to your enquiries respecting Rienzi, the best account I have met with of this poor counterfeit of the Gracchi, who seems to have had enthusiasm & eloquence,

without either wisdom or firmness, is in the 5th & 6th vols. of Sigismondi. he quotes for his authority chiefly the Frammenti di Storia Romana d'anonimo contemporaneo. of the monk Borselaro I know nothing, and my books are all gone to where they will be more useful, & my memory waning under the hand of time.—I think Bekker might have demanded a truce from his antagonists, on the question of a hell, by desiring them first to fix it's geography. but wherever it be, it is certainly the best patrimony of the church, and procures them in exchange the solid acres of this world. I salute you with entire esteem and respect.

TH: JEFFERSON.*

A brief note of slight consequence—save that it illustrates Mr. Jefferson's studied courtesy in small things—follows:

Th: Jefferson asks the favor of Mr. Venderkemp to make his thanks acceptable, if occasion should offer to the worthy lady miss Halshoff who has been so kind as through him to send him her interesting Republican Manuel. it is replete with the soundest principles of human independence, and I commiserate her sufferings in so holy a cause. gloomy however as is the present appearance of it's depression, it will rise again, and the information and spirit excited in Europe will persevere until governments shall be established in it's various countries in which the people will have a representative & controuling branch. he salutes Mr. Venderkemp with constant esteem & respect.

MONTICELLO Dec. 25, 17.

The next letter in the collection follows:

MONTICELLO Feb. 9. 18.

DEAR SIR: Your favor of Jan. 7. has been some time at hand. age, which lethargises all our movements, makes me a slow correspondent also, and revolts me strongly from the labors of the writing table. reading when I can be indulged in it, is the elysium of my present life.

You suppose I may possess essays and scraps, on various

* This and the preceding letter are given by Ford, X., pp. 77, 78, but with some errors, as shown by comparison with the Jefferson MSS.

subjects committed to paper, and lying buried in my desk. No, sir, I have nothing of the sort. my life has been one of unremitting labor, and that in a line entirely foreign to the sciences. it was my lot to be cast into being at the period of the commencement of a political convulsion, which has continued since to agitate the whole civilized globe. that commencement was in my own country; and under circumstances which placed in a state of requisition all the energies of the body and mind of every citizen. it's necessities dragged me from a life of retirement and contemplation, to which my natural propensities strongly inclined, to one of action and contention, and in the field of politics from which I was most averse. in this I have never had leisure to turn to right or left, to indulge for a moment in speculative meditations, much less to commit them to writing.

I return you the paper on incestuous marriages, in which you have proved beyond question that neither under the Mosaic, nor natural law is a man forbidden to take in second marriage the sister of his first. early in our revolution the legislature of Virginia thought it necessary that their code of laws should be revised, and made homogeneous with their new situation. this task was committed to mr. Wythe, mr. Pendleton and myself. among others, the law regulating marriages came under consideration. we thought it most orthodox and correct to copy into our bill the very words of the Levitical law. after continuing in force for some years, the permission to marry a wife's sister was thought to produce in practice jealousies and heartburnings in families, and even temptations to crime; and it was therefore repealed, not as in itself intrinsic guilt, but inexpedient as leading to guilt. this depends much on the family habits and intercourse of each country.

Not having replaced my set of the Philosophical transactions, I am not able to turn to the paper from which you quote the words 'the movements of nature are in a never-ending circle' etc. but I suppose they were in that which I wrote on the discovery of the bones of the *Megalonyx*. this animal was pronounced to be extinct, but I thought it might be doubted whether any particular species of animals or

vegetables, which ever did exist, has ceased to exist. this doubt is suggested by the consideration that if one species of organized matter might become extinct, so might also a 2d. a 3d. and so on to the last: and thus all organized bodies might disappear, and the earth be left without life or intellect, for the habitation of which it is so peculiarly prepared. a particular species of unorganized matter might disappear for a while, and be restored by the fortuitous concurrence & and combination of the elements which compose it, but organized being cannot be restored by accidental aggregation of it's elements. it is reproduced only by it's seed. against it's loss therefore nature has made ample provision, by a profusion of seed, some of which, however inauspiciously scattered, may be sure to take effect. thus, the tree produces a seed, and the seed reproduces a tree. a bird produces an egg, and the egg a bird. an animal or vegetable body, after thus reproducing more or fewer individuals of it's own species, perishes, is decomposed, and it's particles of matter pass into other forms. not one is lost or left unemployed. the Universe is now made up of exactly the same particles of matter, not a single one more or less, which it had in it's original creation. so sung truly the poetical disciple of Pythagoras:

'Nec perit in tanto quicquam (mihi crede) mundo.'

this is the never-ending circle in which I observed that animal and vegetable natures are circulated and secured against failure thro' indefinite time.

Extending our views to the heavenly bodies, we know that certain movements of theirs, heretofore deemed anomalous and erratic, have been considered as indications of disorder, affecting the equilibrium of the powers of impulse and attraction which restrain them in their orbits, and threatening consequently their crush & destruction in time. yet De la Place has now demonstrated that these supposed irregularities are strictly in obedience to the general laws of motion, that they are periodical and secular; and that these members of the Universe also may continue moving in their orbits thro' indefinite time. yet I have not seen this demonstration of a possibility condemned by orthodoxy either of

religion or philosophy. it's only result is that if a time is to be when these bodies shall be brought to an end, it will not be from any defect in the laws of their continuance, but by another 'Sta Sol' of the Creator, by an arrest of their motion from the hand which first impressed it. nor indeed do I know that a belief in the eternity of the world is against the sound doctrines of the Christian faith. the eternity of two beings is not more incomprehensible to us than that of one. the eternity of the Universe, & that of the being who regulates it's order, preserves it's course, and superintends the action of all it's parts, may stand together, as well as either of them alone. and the most eminent divines have considered this coeternity as not inconsistent with the relation of the two beings as Cause and effect. where effect is produced by motion of parts, there they admit there must be priority & posteriority. but where effect is the result of will alone, they are simultaneous and coeval. and they maintain that the Creator must have willed the creation of the world from all eternity. the words of St. Thomas Aquinas are 'Constat quod quicquid Deus nunc vult quod sit, ab æterno voluit quod sit.—et necessarium videtur quod ab æterno creaturam in esse produxerit.' again 'quod enim primo dicitur, agens [*erasure in original*] de necessitate præcedere effectum qui per suam operationem sit, verum est in his que agunt aliquid per *motum*; quia effectus non est nisi in termino motus; agens autem necesse est esse etiam cum motus incipit. in his autem [*erasure in original*] quæ in instanti agunt hoc non est necesse.'——'deus ab æterno fuit jam omnipotens, sicut cum produxit mundum; ab æterno potuit producere mundum: consequentia certissima est, et antecedens verissimum.'——'si mundus non potuisset ab æterno esse, ex eo foret, quia non possunt esse in unico instanti simul causa et effectus, producens et productum. sed hoc falsum est.'——'potuit ergo, cum causa æterna effectus coæternus esse.' The sentiment you quote however neither necessarily involves this course of Cosmogony, nor does it imply any principle of the pantheism which you apprehend it might admit.

I have said so much on this subject that I am afraid you

will imagine I have been defending an *opinion*. not at all. it is a *doubt* only which I have been vindicating from the charge of puerility imputed to it by a writer,* whose greater ripeness of judgment was offended by the doubt. for it was expressed merely as a doubt whether any race of animals which ever did exist, has ceased to exist? for example the Sphynx, Cyclops, Centaur, Satyr, Faun, Mermaid, dragon, Phoenix? Cuvier indeed has proved to us by anatomising their remains, that several animals have existed, now unknown to us. but then follows the 2d inquiry, is it known that they are extinct? have all parts of the earth been sufficiently explored to authorize a confident assertion? e. g. the interior parts of N. & S. America, the interior of Africa, the polar regions Arctic & Antarctic, the Austrasian division of the earth, for we are no longer to talk of it's quarters? of this latter division, a small portion of it's margin only has been explored: and yet what singular and unknown animals have been found there! had a skeleton of one of these floated to our shores half a century ago, it would have been enrolled in the catalogue of 'species extinct.'

I think therefore still, there is reason to doubt whether any species of animal has become extinct; that this does not involve as a necessary consequence the eternity of the world; and, if it did, that we are authorised by the fathers of our faith to say there would be nothing unlawful in this consequence, and I have quoted the authorities of Theologians, rather than of Philosophers, because the former consider these as their natural enemies. for these quotations I am indebted to M. D'Argens.

You ask whether I have seen Cuvier's *essai sur la theorie de la terre*, or Brieslau's *introduction à la geologie*? I have seen neither: and in truth I am disposed to place all these hypothetical theories of the earth in a line with Ovid's

'Ante mare et terras et quod legit omnia coelum
Unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,
Quem dixere Chaos; nidis indigestaque moles.'

for all their theories require the original hand of a Creator: & if his intervention is necessary, why should we suppose

* Dr. B——. [So in original MS.]

him to throw together a rude and indigested mass of matter, and leave it in chaos, unfinished, for millions of years, to work it's own way by mechanical fusions and aggregations, and by chemical affinities and fermentations into mineral forms, and animal and vegetable life? could not he, with the same ease, have created the earth at once, in all the perfection in which it now exists? and were the Genesis of the earth by Moses tradition, not revelation, instead of employing the Creator in detail thro' six days of labor, in one of which he says 'let there be light and there was light,' it would have better filled our ideas of his exalted power and wisdom, to have summed the whole in the single fiat of 'Let the world be, and it was.'

I am afraid that a letter, extended to such inordinate length, will make you doubt the truth with which it began, that I am averse to the labors of the writing-table. yet it is a real truth. but my subject sometimes runs away with me, without controul or discretion, until my reader as well as myself, is ready to welcome with gladness the valedictory assurance of my great esteem and respect.

TH: JEFFERSON.

The letter which follows, like the last, contains a good deal of self-revelation. At the date of its composition Jefferson had passed his 77th birthday. The inevitable weariness of age shows itself in his correspondence. He was still devoted to the promotion of the university which he had founded; was still faithful in letter-writing to his friends; but as the reader doubtless knows, his last years were burdened by financial loss and embarrassment, and care was his companion to the end:

MONTICELLO July 9. 20.

DEAR SIR: Your favor of June 25 is just now received, and I learn from it with much regret that too industrious an use of your eyes has seriously affected them. rest, during the visit you contemplate to Montezillo* may perhaps restore them. I envy you that visit, or rather lament that I have not wings to participate in it. I owe my friend there a

* Residence of John Adams, Quincy, Mass.

letter or two, not for want of inclination to pay the debt, but from a stiffening wrist, the consequence of an antient dislocation, which renders writing slow and painful. our fathers taught us 'never to put off to tomorrow what can be done today.' but this disorganization of the writing hand is leading me to an inversion of the maxim, by never writing today what can be put off to tomorrow. Your conjecture that the *scrutoires* of M. Adams and myself may contain useful things is probably half true. Mr. Adams's I hope does; but mine I assure you does not. my life has been one of meer business. the duties of the various offices in which I have acted, have employed my whole time too fully, to admit any collateral pursuit. the transactions of these offices have indeed been embodied chiefly in the letters they required me to write. but to look for anything valuable in that pile, would be seeking a needle in a haystack.

I trust with you that the genuine and simple religion of Jesus will one day be restored: such as it was preached and practiced by himself. very soon after his death it became muffled up in mysteries, and has been ever since kept in concealment from the vulgar eye. to penetrate and dissipate these clouds of darkness, the general mind must be strengthened by education. enlightened by its torch the disciples of religion will see that, instead of abandoning their reason, as the superstitions of every country requires, and taking for the will of their god whatever their own hierophants declare it to be (and no two of them declaring it alike) that god has confided to them the talent of reason, not to hide under a bushel, but to render him account of it's employment. I hope that day of restoration is to come, altho' I shall not live to see it, and to my prayers that it may come soon, I add those for your health and happiness.

TH: JEFFERSON

The note which follows, and the letter dated New York, 31st March, 1790, are the only ones in the collection not wholly in Jefferson's handwriting:

MONTICELLO, Aug. 3. 23.

DEAR SIR: Your kind letter of May 26. has laid too long by me awaiting an answer. the truth is that the diffi-

culty of writing has obliged me even when in better health to withdraw much from correspondence, and now an illness of some weeks, from which I am just recovering, obliges me to use a borrowed pen to acknowledge it's receipt. and indeed that is all I can do even now, my mind being entirely abstracted from all the business of the world political, literary, worldly or of whatever other form. my debility is extreme, permitting me to ride a little, but to walk scarcely at all. I am equal only to the passive occupation of reading. in this state of body and mind I can only assure my friends that I shall ever recollect with affection the pleasures their correspondence has afforded me, and shall pray without ceasing for their health, happiness & prosperity. among these I pray you to be assured that I entertain for yourself distinguished sentiments of esteem & high respect.

TH: JEFFERSON

Nearly six months later, evidently under the influence of improved health, Jefferson sent the following characteristic epistle to Judge van der Kemp:

MONTICELLO Jan. 11, 24.

DEAR SIR: Your favor of Dec. 28. is duly received. it gladdens me with the information that you continue to enjoy health. this is a principal mitigation of the evils of age. I wish that the situation of our friend Mr. Adams was equally comfortable, but what I learn of his physical condition is truly deplorable. his mind however continues strong and firm, his memory sound his hearing perfect, and his spirits good. but both he and myself are at that term of life when there is nothing before us to produce anxiety for it's continuance. I am sorry for the occasion of expressing my condolence on the loss mentioned in your letter. the solitude in which we are left by the death of our friends is one of the great evils of protracted life. when I look back to the days of my youth it is like looking over a field of battle. all, all dead! and ourselves left alone amidst a generation whom we know not, and who know not us.

I thank you beforehand for the book of your friend P.

Vreede of which you have been so kind as to bespeak a copy for me.—on the subject of my porte-feuille be assured it contains nothing but copies of my letters. in these I have sometimes indulged myself in reflections on the things which have been passing. some of them, like that to the Quaker to which your letter refers, may give a moment's amusement to a reader, and from the voluminous mass, when I am dead, a selection may perhaps be made, of a view which may have interest enough to bear a single reading. mine has been too much a life of action to allow my mind to wander from the occurrences pressing on it.

I have been lately reading a most extraordinary book, that of M. Flourens on the functions of the nervous system, in vertebrated animals. he proves by too many, and too accurate experiments, to admit contradiction, that from such animals the whole contents of the cerebrum may be taken out, leaving the cerebellum and the rest of the system uninjured, and the animal continue to live, in perfect health, an indefinite period. he mentions particularly a case of 10½ months survivance of a pullet. in that state the animal is deprived of every sense of perception, intelligence, memory and thought of every degree, it will perish on a heap of corn unless you cram it down it's throat. it retains the power of motion, but feeling no motive it never moves unless from external excitement. he demonstrates in fact that the cerebrum is the organ of thought, & possesses alone the faculty of thinking. this is a terrible tub thrown out to the Athanasians. they must tell us whether the soul remains in the body in this state, deprived of the power of thought? or does it leave the body, as in death? and where does it go? can it be received into heaven while it's body is living on earth? these and a multitude of other questions it will be incumbent on them to answer otherwise than by the dogma that everyone who believeth not with them, without doubt shall perish everlastingly. the Materialist, fortified by these new proofs of his own creed, will hear with derision these Athanasian denunciations. it will not be very long before you and I shall know the truth of all this, and in the mean

time I pray for the continuance of your health, contentment and comfort.

TH: JEFFERSON*

The last letter in the collection, written but seven months before its author's death, is in the same neat, precise and legible penmanship always characteristic of Jefferson. To the end he adhered to certain epistolary eccentricities:

MONTICELLO, NOV. 30. 25.

DEAR SIR: Your favor of the 16th is just received, and your silence in it on the subject of your health makes me hope it is good. a dozen years older than you are, I have no right to expect as good. I have now been confined to the house 6 months, but latterly get better, insomuch as, for a few days past, to ride a little on horseback. I duly received the favor of Mr. Vreede's book, & meant, in my first letter to you, to request you to return my thanks for it, to him. but this has been delayed by indisposition. I cannot however promise, what you seem to wish, to read it with sufficient attention to pass a judgment on it. although my eye-sight is so good as not to use glasses by day, either for reading or writing, yet constant occupation in the concerns of university permits me to read very little; and that of commercial science was never a favorite reading with me. the classics are my first delight, and I unwillingly lay them by for the productions of the day. Such a work as Flourens indeed commands a preference. I have lost my copy, by lending it, or I should have given you the reading of it with pleasure.

Our University, now the main business of my life, is going on with all the success I could expect. the Professors we obtained from England are of the highest order of science in their lines, and of excellent private characters. indeed we have been most fortunate in that selection. our term for the 1st year is near closing. at the opening of the 2d, which will be on the 1st of February, we shall have more students offering than we shall be able to accommodate. the pro-

* Ford gives this letter (X., p. 336) but has the date 1825. Though plainly addressed, on the outside of the folded sheet, to "Olden Barneveld, near Trenton, N. Y.," this letter as are two or three of the others, is marked "Missent to Trenton, N. J." They all bear Mr. Jefferson's frank.

vision made for them does not go beyond 250. or 260. we shall enlarge it as fast as we can. but Rome was not built in a day. the institution is on the most liberal plan, and very little expensive. Hoping you may continue to enjoy good health, and a life of satisfaction, as long as you think life satisfactory at all, I pray you to be assured of my affectionate good wishes & great esteem and respect.

TH: JEFFERSON

Mr. Jefferson's interest in science, and the philosophical habit of his mind, to both of which these letters bear witness, are facts familiar to all students of his career. His view of Christ, and his opinions of Christianity in its various aspects, are nowhere else set forth more clearly or explicitly than in this correspondence now for the first time given to the public.

Of Judge van der Kemp, so lately has his autobiography been edited and published, it will suffice here to note that he survived Mr. Jefferson some three years, and died on Sept. 7, 1829. His services rendered to history, in the translation of the Dutch Records of Colonial New York, will perhaps be better appreciated in days to come. The translation which he made is yet for the most part unpublished, but is accessible to all students of the subject, in the manuscripts office of the State Library at Albany.

NOTE. The van der Kemp manuscripts owned by the Buffalo Historical Society include the following:

1. His autobiography, addressed to his son J. J. van der Kemp of Philadelphia, 1817. It has been edited and published with other material under the title "Francis Adrian van der Kemp," &c., by Helen Lincklaen Fairchild, New York, 1903.
2. Address on the occasion of Judge van der Kemp's death, by Rev. T. B. Peirce, Sept. 10, 1829; and funeral sermon, Sept. 20, 1829. Unpublished.
3. Tour from the Hudson to Lake Ontario in 1792. Published, Buffalo Historical Society Publications, vol. II., 1880.
4. A Dutch Symposium. Unpublished.
5. Memoir on the use of Copper by the Greeks. Unpublished.
6. Researches on Buffon's and Jefferson's Theories in Natural History. About 300 closely written pages. Unpublished.
7. Miscellaneous autograph letters to Judge van der Kemp, mostly unpublished.
8. Eleven letters from DeWitt Clinton. Unpublished.
9. Letters from Thomas Jefferson, now first published.
10. Diplomas and commissions.



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